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SO YOU DON'T WANT TO BE A SEX OBJECT

RULE NUMBER ONE:

DON'T EXPECT ANYONE TO MAKE YOU HAPPY

There is no person, male or female, who can *make* you happy. There are people it's fun to be with, people you enjoy, people who enjoy you. Fun comes and goes. It never lasts forever, and no one can give it to you, or guarantee it, or make unhappiness stay away from your door.

If you expect someone to make you happy, you're expecting too much. If you feel happier when you're with certain people, it's because you feel good about yourself when you're with them. You're making yourself happy through the pleasure you take in their company. Concentrate on how you feel, don't expect it to last

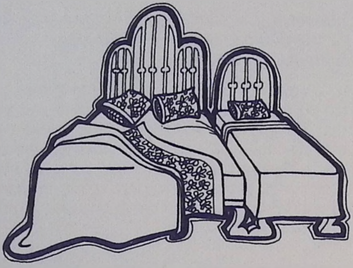
forever, and don't demand that other people do it for you. You can't demand happiness from anyone, or any man, because it comes from inside you.

You wouldn't be human if sometimes you didn't feel lost and lonely, desperate for companionship, and as though the only thing that will help is to "have" someone of your own. This is the emotion that pushes some women to have babies and that pushes others into marriages which have little chance of working out. This is the emotion that forces some people onto drugs, into drinking too much, or into fanatic membership in "causes" so that belonging can take the place of loneliness.

The old "extended family" of grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, brothers and sisters, did much to prevent this kind of loneliness. The new "extended family" of the commune serves the same purpose. In between the two are all kinds of good alternatives, but expecting one particular person to fill all your needs is not one of them.

RULE NUMBER TWO:

MAKE UP YOUR MIND ABOUT SEX



Don't diddle around about sex. Decide how you feel about it, what you want from it, whether you want it and with whom, and then be honest about it. What kind are you interested in?

SEX BETWEEN ACQUAINTANCES

In the current movement toward "Women's Lib" and equality, the rules of sex and dating get confused with side issues. Who pays? Who owes what to whom? What are the expectations on both sides?

The expectations are frequently false, on both sides. You assume that he wants you to go to bed with him, and he assumes that you expect him to want you to go to bed with him, and maybe you do expect that, and maybe he does, and then again, maybe not. You assume that you'll pay your own way, but he assumes — and so forth. Two people get caught up in a great many completely phoney assumptions, and neither one of them enjoys it.

The easiest way to analyze this is to take sex out of it. Pretend that your name is Ben.

Adam, a guy you've just met, wants to go to the theatre on Friday night. He does one of two things. He invites you (Ben) to go

with him; he did the inviting; he pays. Or, he says that the play is great, and he'd like to have you (Ben) join him, but he can't afford two tickets. Would you (Ben) be interested in getting a ticket and joining him. In either case, you (Ben) may accept or refuse.

If Adam does the inviting, and the paying, the old rules of hospitality and courtesy take over. You (Ben) now owe return hospitality. You can pay off this social debt with an invitation to dinner, or a ballgame, or (if you don't like him well enough to spend any more time with him) by sending a "thank you" gift — maybe a bottle of wine or some cheeses. The gift should be impersonal and non-lasting. You don't want a remembrance of you sitting around his apartment forever.

If each of you paid his own way, neither of you owes the other one anything.

Whether your name is Ben or Betty, Whether you are male or female is irrelevant. The same rules hold. You don't owe Adam sex. You don't owe him exact dollar value (The ticket was $9.90 so the wine should cost —). You owe him courtesy, nothing more.

After that, it's up to you and Adam whether the association is repeated. It may be very pleasantly repeated, every now and then. You may never see one another again. You may start being together at every opportunity. Frequency doesn't matter. The same rules still hold. Acceptance of an invitation, or many invitations, makes no commitments. A woman has no other responsibility toward a man who takes her out than to return the hospitality.

If you decide that you like one another well enough to have a sexual relationship (or if, regrettably, a sexual episode "just happens") the same rules still apply. Neither of you owes sex to the other. The fact that you've been to bed together changes nothing. If he pleases you, at his convenience and on his own terms, you may return the pleasure, at your convenience and on your own terms.

Under these circumstances, you will, of course, retain title to your own body. You will pay for your own contraception, your own doctor, your own baby sitter. This assures that you have the right to refuse. If he calls, and you've decided that you don't care to go on with it, you have the right to say, "No, thank you." He has the same right, and both of you will have the courtesy to accept a polite refusal without pursuing the matter.

SEX BETWEEN FRIENDS

Acquaintances do not "owe" one another anything but courtesy. Friends begin to obligate themselves to a kind of commitment. Friendship implies a commitment to mutual understanding. With an acquaintance you can say a polite, "No, thank you", and leave it at that. With a friend, you would expect to provide an explanation.

Friendship implies that each person is commited to meeting at least some of the needs of the other person whether it is convenient or not. The needs may or may not include sex. Sex may be a permanent part of the friendship, or a temporary part, but the inclusion is only a part of the relationship. The friendship can exist without it.

If you go to a party and end up in bed with someone you've just met, don't kid yourself that you are friends. You may become friends, and you may not. You may have that intention, and he may have another intention. There is only one proof of friendship, and that is the mutual willingness of two people over a protracted period of time to meet one anothers needs.

If you want rules — you can't be sure it's friendship unless it's been going on for some time, a year or so. It probably isn't friendship if it causes a lot of grief. It isn't friendship if one of you is always pursuing and the other is always avoiding. It isn't friendship if one of you feels inadequate and misunderstood, or if the relationship is painful and insecure. It may be that one of you is incapable of friendship, or it may mean that this isn't the right relationship. Maybe you're caught up in the old mythology:

- The old mythology tells you that it's all right to have sex if you're married or "in love".
- You have had, or want to have, or are having sex.
- In order to save your pride and avoid guilt, you have to convince yourself that you are "in love" (and probably that this will lead to marriage).
- So, you drive yourself and the man involved crazy by trying to establish a relationship that just isn't there.

Friendship is not exclusive, and it doesn't always lead to marriage, which leaves you only a few ways to go.

Don't have sex at all until you're ***married.*** That doesn't mean until you ***think*** you might get married, or ***hope*** you might get married, it means ***married.***

OR

Keep sex out of the relationship until all of the conditions of friendship are met, and you know that's what you want. If you've known each other for quite a while, if you spend a lot of time together, if you are happy together ***and*** apart, if you understand one anothers needs and meet them, you probably have a friendship going.

OR

Have your sexual relationship, but don't force something else out of it. Don't pursue, whine, demand, cry, throw tantrums, or get pregnant. Accept sex for what it is, for whatever pleasure it gives you. But, don't demand that it mean any more to him than the pleasure it gives him.

Don't lie to yourself. Don't say, "He really loves me, he just doesn't know how to show it." Don't say, "He really needs me". You can judge the relationship, precisely, by how both of you feel and act, not by what you say.

SEX BETWEEN BUYERS

There are all kinds of buying going on between the sexes, and we'd be fools to say that it doesn't happen. It may happen to you while you are almost unaware of it. Sex between buyers happens every time someone owes sexual "role playing" to another person for some other reason than friendship.

If the guy pays your rent, or your baby sitter, or for your contraceptives, he figures you owe him — sex, or cooking, or doing his laundry. That's sex between buyers. If he gives you gifts, and you figure you owe him, that's sex between buyers. If the guy marries you, and he figures you owe him, that's sex between buyers.

There's nothing particularly wrong with this provided that both parties to the transaction know what's going on. If one person is

giving out of friendship and the other is giving because it's owed, there can be a lot of agony involved.

Sometimes the man will ***want*** to pay for your company. He may think that's the only way he can get your company. He may be very uncomfortable with anything that's freely given. Receiving may scare him half to death. Returning affection may scare him even more. He can't give, he can't receive, but he can buy. That way he feels that the books are always balanced. Whatever he paid for, you owed him. When he's ready to walk away, the account will be closed, which is all right provided that you understand it that way.

Between buyers, the seller reserves the right to go out of business. If the books are always in balance, you can close the account at any time. This kind of sex doesn't require long term contracts. If you want out, get out.

DESPERATE SEX

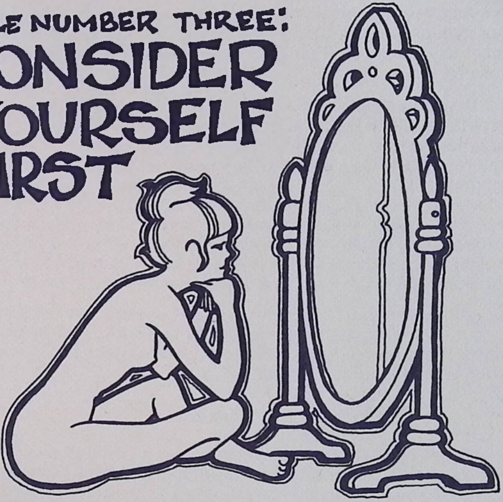
Desperate sex is the sick, lonely, miserable kind of sex that two people get involved in when at least one of them would do literally anything to make contact with the world or to forget trouble or unhappiness. It's very like getting drunk, or taking drugs. Desperate sex leaves you with a sick feeling (like a hangover) and it won't be cured by more of the same. Like drinking or drugs, it can get to be a habit with certain people, and it can get to be a kind of self-punishment. If you find yourself feeling "frantic", "chasing sex", looking three times at men you don't even ***like,*** do something else.

SOLO SEX

There's nothing wrong with masturbation.

RULE NUMBER THREE:

CONSIDER YOURSELF FIRST



You have to live with you for the rest of your life. Joe may run off to Indonesia with a belly-dancer. Your kids (if and when) may go to Mars or Afghanistan or take up organic farming. You'll still be with you, and if all you had in life was Joe and the kids, what's left for you won't be worth talking about.

MAKE YOUR OWN PLANS

At some point you must decide who and what you want to be. You'll have to make an honest list of priorities. Start by listing all the things you want to do, or be, and then ask yourself, "If I could have only *one* of these, which would it be?"

That answer becomes your top priority. If that answer is "a man", whether a specific man or just any man, don't kid yourself that *your* future plans are important to you. All of your plans will have to

be subservient to his. Either you will have to agree with him what your mutual goals are going to be, or you will have to give up yours to him. If the man is your top priority, you can't ask him to give up his goals for you.

If your answer should be, "Marry Joe," don't think of it as something which will be accomplished at some time. If you want to stay married, the answer should be, "Marry Joe, stay married to Joe, stay married to Joe..." That way it becomes a lifetime goal. If your priority is, "Marry Joe, and then something else" you're playing a different game. In that case, Joe isn't your top priority, he's just your first one. There are a great many Joes in the world who were someones first priority, but not the top one. Joe was just the preliminary to children. Or to the country club. Or to the condominium. Or to the long, lazy days of not having to work anymore.

Whatever your top priority is, you'll have to do something about it. You won't suddenly wake up at age forty able to play the harpsichord. You'll have to keep on working at doing and being, whether Joe is around or not.

DO THINGS FOR YOURSELF

Open your own doors, light your own cigarettes, pick up your own packages, and carry your own luggage. If you have a heavy suitcase, and the man standing next to you (who is 6'2") picks it up, fine, but don't stand around waiting for him to do it. Next time, pack lighter.

If you can handle an eggbeater, you can handle a screwdriver. If you can turn over a mattress, you can change a tire. If you can sew on a button, you can drive a nail. If you don't know how, you can learn. And, so can he.

KEEP YOUR OWN BANK ACCOUNT

The "everything I have is ours" routine is cute and romantic, but it's most practical for a truly compound organism, like a jellyfish.

Suppose you want to buy your sister a gift, and he hates your sister, and you end up spending $93.75 out of the joint account. Suppose you have to pay a traffic ticket, and you'd simply rather not discuss it. No matter how perfect the living-together arrangements,

there are still individuals concerned who must have some room left for individuality.

If you both have incomes, a part of each can go into the household account to pay expenses. If only one of you has an income, the other should have a personal allowance separate and distinct from household expenses. People argue more about money than they do about sex. There should be no argument. His is his. Yours is yours. Some goes to pay joint expenses. If there is a vast inequity between your two salary levels which is not based on a difference in age, or experience, or qualifications, or ability, try to be fair. If he makes a lot more simply because he's a man, and that's the *only* reason, the relative contributions to joint expenses should be adjusted.

WORK OUT AGREEMENTS

If you've ever taken a defensive driving course, you've learned to ask yourself questions like, "If that crazy driver two cars ahead swerves into the right lane again, what will I do?"

A defensive living course asks the same kinds of questions. "If his company moves him to Ashtabula, what will I do?" "If I get pregnant before we're ready, what will I do?" Or, simpler things like, "If the baby gets sick, who stays home from work with him?" Or, "If we both work until 5:30, who gets the supper ready?"

Any relationship beyond the acquaintance stage should provide for working out agreements which are mutually satisfying — or at least which are mutually least bothersome. "Don't call me on Tuesdays, because I'm too busy on Tuesdays to talk." An agreement which is all one sided isn't an agreement.

If there is any one time when agreements are important, it's before a baby is planned. Once that baby is on the way you're committed to twenty years. You'd better be sure that the agreements are workable. How long will you stay home? Who will care for the child? What changes will you make in your life? Some things have to be decided on a day to day basis, but the big decisions need to be made far enough in advance to give real agreement a chance. Too many women have wakened one frosty morning to find themselves with a toddler or two and a man long gone, because he never had a chance to agree to anything.

RULE NUMBER FOUR:

DON'T TRY TO PLAY IT BOTH WAYS

If you've decided to be the old fashioned girl, the example of fascinating womanhood, and the rest of that, OK, be it. Be it all the time. Be it and don't hassle other women who want something else.

If you've decided that you don't want all that manipulation and pseudo-submission and geisha mentality, than be something else. All the time. Consistently.

DON'T PLAY POOR LITTLE ME

Don't ask your male co-workers to lift something, or climb up somewhere. If you were doing housework, you'd shift the couch, carry in the groceries, pick up a child weighing forty to fifty pounds.

The maximum strength of women, as a group, is not equal to the maximum strength of men, as a group. However, maximum

strength is seldom needed. Watch the moving men, sometime. The little guy who weighs 120 lbs. is the one shifting the piano. You can learn to lift, or carry easily. Maximum strength has little to do with it.

DON'T MISTAKE COURTESY FOR PATRONAGE

Some men have the habit of opening doors or lighting cigarettes for women. So what? If you'll take time to notice, you'll see that men also open doors and light cigarettes for one another. The person who gets to the door first, or who has hands free, or who is holding the lighter makes a courteous gesture to someone else. You can do the same things, and should. Courtesy can be applied both ways between the sexes.

DON'T FALL INTO THE RHETORIC TRAP

Some men are miserable examples of humanity, and so are some women. If you're a walking recording of "Male chauvinist pig" rhetoric, what you're actually broadcasting is that you're hostile to half the human race. You don't have to like all men, but if you hate them all (or say you do) it means something is wrong with you. Save your cries of "foul" and "injustice" for real fouls and real injustices, and then fight like crazy. You won't win friends by boring everyone half to death.

DON'T LET THEM GET AWAY WITH IT

If the men in your company get paid more than you do for doing the same work, don't let the company get away with it. If the personnel and hiring policies discriminate against women, don't let them get away with it. If you try to buy a house or rent an apartment and the terms of the sale or lease discriminate against you, don't let them get away with it.

If the man in your life expects you to spend every weekend at his place cleaning and ironing, don't let him get away with it. If you always end up taking the minutes at your organization meetings because the other members are men, don't let them get away with that, either.

DON'T ALLOW STEREOTYPES TO CONTINUE

Remember what the stereotypes are: women as property, children as property, male roles, female roles, particularly females as silly little things.

- Property: People do not belong to other people. Sometimes the possessive pronoun is the symbol of an attitude. With family members it is sometimes difficult to avoid saying, "my husband" or "my daughter", but it shouldn't be difficult to avoid "my secretary". It's perfectly possible to say, "Please call Ms. Jones with that information" rather then "Call my secretary." People will only be able to achieve individuality when we quit identifying them first as belonging to someone else. Newspapers are terrible offenders. "Mary Smith, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Humperdink Smith of such and such street..." If Mary received an award or if Mary was arrested, she should be able to do it on her own.

- Roles: If you have a son, he should know how to cook, mend wash and iron his clothes, shop for groceries and plan decent meals. If you have a daughter, she should know how to maintain a car, change a tire, make household repairs, and manage a budget. Everyone, male or female, requires nourishment, shelter, clothing, transportation, income, and no able bodied person should have to lean on someone else for the necessities. If you give your four year old girl a doll and your four year old boy a truck, you don't have the idea.

- Silliness: Letting yourself go with that high, squealing giggle that sounds like a slaughtered pig; piling on the false eyelashes until your eyes are lost in the underbrush; wearing your sweaters cut to the nipple line to work or to class; doing all that and then complaining because men treat you as a sex object. What else? Always forgetting things, always being late, always being helpless, and then resenting people thinking you're a silly little thing. What else?

DON'T CHEAT

Good people are trustworthy. They don't cheat. If the agreement is that the two of you will not have a baby (or simply if there has been no agreement *to have* a baby) don't skip the pill for a month or so and say you forgot — or that it made you dizzy and you were

worried about your health. Your health is risked more during pregnancy than it is by the pill, and you know it. You can lie a little to protect someone's feelings or dignity, but don't lie to yourself.

DON'T BLOW IT BY BAD MANAGEMENT

You can ruin yourself by mishandling your money. If you're new at being on your own, it's all too easy to get yourself into a terrible financial situation by buying things that you can't afford or by trying to live up to the standard your parents provided. Don't let parents, or people, give you things you can't afford to keep. That cute sports car may gulp gasoline, be expensive to insure, and impossible to repair. Expensive personal possessions have to be insured. If you're expecting your parents to come through with a nice check on birthdays and holidays, or if you're expecting anyone else to bail you out, you're not managing.

Don't be a victim of the "college student" syndrome. This is the simplistic view that "I need $100 for rent and $100 for food, and the rest of it I can blow...." You can't blow it. When you were in school someone else was paying your insurance, your clothing, you weren't paying taxes, someone else paid your medical bills (or you had student health). A budget should look something like this:

Total amount of income, after taxes, each month	$100%
Housing, including utilities and furnishings	30%
Food	17%
Clothing, including cleaning, laundry	10%
Transportation, including car insurance	15%
Medical care including medical insurance, dental	10%
Personal insurance	5%
Recreation, personal, charity, savings, (optional things)	13%

If you make $500 a month, after taxes, and only spend $120 for rent, including utilities, you can afford a $30 payment per month on furniture, appliances, or what have you. Don't think you'll save by doing without insurance. One accident and you'll be wiped out. If you ride a bike, you can afford more for rent, or for clothing, or for skiing.

Never sign a contract to buy *anything* until you've thought about it for a long time and received some good advice if you're uncertain. If you have budget trouble, tear up your credit cards.

RULE NUMBER FIVE: DON'T EXPECT IT TO BE EASY

We've had untold generations of culture firmly rooted in the idea of men's roles and women's roles. Men's roles are to be explorers, scientists, doctors, mathematicians, hunters, artists, architects, engineers... Women's roles are to be mothers. You and a specific man are friends, and more, but he can't escape the role bit. Every time a crisis comes along, he shifts you into the "mother" role.

BE PATIENT

If you're friends, you can talk. If you can't talk, you're not friends. If he wants you to be mother for a while because he's sick, or miserable, or down — there's nothing wrong with that. When you're sick, or miserable, or down, you expect the same thing. But, if he wants you to be mother all the time so that he won't have to worry about his laundry, that's something else. Helping with feelings is a person's job. Women always doing the laundry is a role stereotype.

DON'T BE AFRAID OF FEELINGS

Being a person, an individual, is based on logic and thought and a basic idea of fairness. Feelings don't work logically or thoughtfully or fairly. Sometimes feelings will sweep over the whole

person and wipe logic out. The person will break up. You will. He will. Tiredness will do it, or pressure, or depression. When it happens, it's not the time for a long, logical discussion about women's rights or male chauvinism or your respective roles in the relationship. It's the time for comforting and listening; for letting the logic go and caring.

DON'T USE FEELINGS AS A WEAPON

One of the best ways in the world to determine whether you have a friend is to remember how the person reacts when you break down. Was he (she) close, warm, and comforting or did he (she) suddenly remember an appointment across town. One of the best ways to determine whether *you* are being a friend is to ask yourself *why* you break down. Is it to get his attention? Is it when you think he might be wanting to do something else or be with someone other than you?

If your feelings explode frequently, once every few weeks or more, ask yourself why. Is the immediate cause something between you or something outside? Is it anger? Hurt pride? Ruined expectations? Is it something one of you did? Had you agreed that you wouldn't?

Are you trying to run his private life and getting angry because he won't let you. Is he trying to run yours? Agree on your expectations and honor your agreements. A selfish temper tantrum is a selfish temper tantrum whether you're three or thirty. An honest eruption of feelings is something else again.

RULE NUMBER SIX:

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

If the last doctor you saw was a male chauvinist, find another doctor. You don't have to be treated like an idiot child, and if a male doctor treated you that way, don't go back to him. What should you expect?

- You should expect the doctor to answer your questions fully, however long that takes.
- You should expect the doctor to take your choices into consideration in the matter of contraception or conception or abortion.
- You should expect the doctor to treat you with respect:

As examples:

- If you ask for diaphragm and the doctor says, "Oh, you don't want a diaphragm "
- If you have an abortion and the doctor says, "Why don't you just get married so that you won't have to go through this any more"

- If you have been using contraception for some time, and the doctor says, "Why don't you have a baby "
- If you've been using the pill with no problems, and the doctor says," I think you ought to go off the pill and have an IUD "

Your responses:

- "I do want a diaphragm, and if you don't know how to fit one, can you recommend a doctor who does."
- "Doctor, unless you are proposing marriage, I don't think that my social and personal life need concern you."
- "Doctor, I will have a baby when and if I feel that I'm ready for that responsibility."
- "Doctor, if your concern is based on medical considerations, I'd appreciate your explaining to me precisely what they are."
- If *he* calls you Honey, you can call him Honey, If he calls you by your first name, you can call him by his first name.

If the doctor treats you with respect, treat the doctor with respect. Once you have a doctor that you respect, have yourself checked regularly.

Unless you and your partner are completely monogamous, have yourself checked regularly for VD. There is only one thing more embarrassing than getting a venereal disease, and that is giving a venereal disease. If you were with someone last week and with someone else this week well, the chance is always there. If he is with you this week but was with someone else last week how do you know who she was? You can avoid the possibility of giving or getting by avoiding those kinds of relationships or by insisting that the man uses a condom. Don't expect the man to ***have*** a condom; you carry them.

Get and use good contraception. Women who have a consistent sexual relationship are more likely to get and use good contraception. Women who have an occasional "just happened" kind of life either put off getting contraception, tell themselves that it won't happen again, or engage in some other bit of wishful thinking.

Don't lie to yourself or kid yourself. If you *ever* have sex, get and use good contraception.

The pill is the safest. Taken as directed, the pill is 99.7% effective.

The IUD is about 95% safe, and it's the best method for someone who doesn't plan, doesn't remember, and doesn't like to think about it.

The diaphragm is very good if you will have it properly fitted and use it correctly, which means every time you have sex. Many doctors, particularly young ones, have no idea how to fit a diaphragm they feel it isn't "modern" and they bad mouth the method. If you want a good method with *no* side effects, go for the diaphragm. Most failures are failures to use it right.

The foam for you and the condom for your partner, used together, are very effective. The condom, even alone, is quite effective.

Douching, rhythm, suppositories, and wishful thinking are not contraceptives. "Mental attitude" is not a contraceptive. Repeating one hundred times, "I can't get pregnant" is not a contraceptive. You can, and you probably will.

If something does "just happen", don't sit around chewing your nails. Do something. Get to the doctor within two days for the "morning after" medication. This is not a substitute for good contraception, but it is an effective emergency measure.

Don't, for heaven's sake, go off into the wilds for a week's vacation without taking contraception. If something "just happens" the first night, a week later will be too late for easy remedies.

Get a pap test every year. If you're on the pill, be sure that your blood pressure is checked and that you report any strange symptoms. Have bladder and vaginal infections attended to immediately. Learn to do a breast self exam, and do it, regularly.

RULE NUMBER SEVEN:

BE A PERSON NOT A "MYSOMEBODY"

Write one hundred times:

My name is ______________________________

I am not a "mywife," a "mydaughter," a "mymother," or a "mysecretary." I am a person.

Once you're sure of that, you can be a better anything.

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